



Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock,
Fisheries & Cooperatives



PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 09, 2021

Agriculture Ministry and Microsoft Demonstrate Roadmap for sector Digital Transformation

Nairobi – The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries today hosted a national dialogue themed: ***Agriculture Data and Digitization Transformation: Considerations in Policy and Implementation Frameworks***. The online event is part of an ongoing global process in preparation for the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit, whose national Convenor is Cabinet Secretary Hon. Peter G. Munya. The Ministry used the opportunity to convene stakeholders to expound on its Agriculture Sector Coordination and Digitization Strategy, and the implementation roadmap developed in partnership with the technology giant, Microsoft.

Access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) in both urban and rural areas is growing rapidly. But progress is uneven in geographic and socio-economic terms and in many areas, women and youth have less access to smartphones and digital services and in many cases, access to ICT does not translate to improved outcomes in food and nutrition security, and livelihood for agricultural communities.

Like the rest of the world, Kenya's food systems are in the middle of a digital revolution as the COVID-19 pandemic brought in the weaknesses of present food systems and highlighted the need for access to technology and digital connectivity for all. This dialogue brought together partners running different data and digital innovation initiatives across the country to share experiences and make recommendations for consideration at the UN Food Systems Summit.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries was represented by the Coordinator of the Agricultural Transformation Office (ATO), Ms. Thule Lenneiye and the Principal Secretary, Crop Development and Agriculture Research, Prof. Hamadi Iddi Boga.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Boga noted that “There is robust data held in silos by various government and research institutions. Now more than ever, it is essential to consolidate, digitalize and centralize this data for the benefit of farmers and other key players. Having a centralized data centre will foster data sharing and provide a reliable single source of truth.”

Prof. Boga further noted that “due to the fast-paced technology and interdisciplinary nature of the agriculture sector, universities and the Kenya School of Agriculture should relook at their curriculum and retool graduates to have the technology skills and competencies requisite for the agriculture sector.”

The Ministry of ICT, was represented by the Principal Secretary, Dr. Jerome Ochieng. In his opening remarks, Dr. Ochieng reiterated that: “The future of agriculture depends on digital systems. These will improve farm produce, environment and also the health of people.”

Other discussions covered included: AI in Agriculture, led by Strathmore University and KALRO; Use of GIS for County Food Systems Planning by H.E. Governor Wilberforce Ottichilo, Vihiga County; Digital innovations to increase production, marketing and access to affordable, nutritious and safe food by Mr. Sri Bharatam of Kuza Biashara; and Adoption of digital innovations to increase access to finance and insurance by Mr. Alex Mwaniki, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives.

Microsoft Country Director Ms. Kendi Ntwiga said that digitisation can help transform Kenya’s agricultural sector, improve productivity, and help the country make significant progress towards achieving food security.

“The transformation of smallholder farming to improve efficiency, productivity and assure quality controls enabled through digitisation can certainly support Kenya’s agricultural transformation strategy. It can transform the use of more than four million hectares of farmed land as well as the livelihoods of more than five million rural households. Nevertheless, to enable agricultural transformation through digitisation, a large amount of data must be collected and properly utilised.”

She added that the collection and use of data to inform decision-making can improve crop cycle timings, decrease uncertainties for investors, and lower the cost of identifying opportunities for improved efficiency.

Interesting and elaborate discussions took place in the breakout sessions highlighting some of the key issues that will support the transformation of agriculture through digitization, including the need for partnerships, capacity building, financing and streamlined governance of digital agriculture.

On the need for enhanced partnerships, Mr. Samuel Munguti, CEO of Farmer Pride, noted that harnessed collaborations between the private sector and government have the potential to achieve scale and sustainability I access to digital solutions for the smallholder farmer.

The role of the youth was also highlighted with Mr. Sriram Bharatam of Kuza Biashara emphasizing the need for private sector social enterprises to build the capacity of young people and help them learn, connect and grow at scale as it is only through micro entrepreneurship that we can make a difference.

Digital technologies have played an enormous role in connecting farmers to markets. Ms. Jo Ryan, CEO of Tru Trade noted that “we are all about the market. We connect buyers with produce and farmers with the market through our sustainable supply chains.” Mr. Munguti, Farmer Pride further added: “Our market platform provides smallholder farmers access to agribusiness information on delivery or right inputs and sustainable agribusiness opportunities to power agriculture transformation.”

Note to Editors

In 2021, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, will convene a Food Systems Summit as part of the decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. Innovation has been identified as a cross cutting lever of change for the Food Systems Summit. It will bring together public, private and social sector innovation partners in a commitment to make innovation a significant enabling factor for food systems transformation and the achievement of all 17 SDGs, both before and during the Summit. The innovation community has identified a twin-track approach that supports specific Action Tracks and new initiatives, while also promoting an agenda that cuts across business models, scientific research, technological advances and social change. Emerging areas of focus include data and digital, scientific and technological, national and regional innovation ecosystems, as well as societal and institutional innovation models, including traditional and Indigenous knowledge.

The Government of Kenya's Agriculture Coordination and Digitisation Strategy seeks to address three key challenges: First, catalyzing the research and innovation space in agriculture, including around use of big data and advanced analytics (AA). Second, enabling more reliable access to usable and shareable data. And finally, demanding for quality analyses to support evidence-based decisions on performance management, M&E, research, and policy. The Agriculture Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS) 2019-2029 commits to ensuring that agriculture data is available, usable, timely, and interoperable. It recognizes the importance of having both traditional data such as censuses and surveys in addition to other innovative data sources.

Microsoft, Kenya's digital transformation roadmap and other relevant work...

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